

Abstract

There have been many kinds of teaching methodologies in ELT. Of these approaches, some were more popular than others in university teaching in China viz. the Grammar Translation method, the Audio-lingual method, the Communicative Approach. Among these approaches, the most dominant is the product-based, teacher-centred learning characteristic of the Grammar Translation method which has dominated ELT in China as seen in curriculum, textbooks and educational thinking. Though its place has been taken over by the Audio-lingual and the Communicative Method, its influence still remains.

1. A brief history of ELT in China

The Grammar-Translation method was popular before and after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Shen, 2000). All class activities were teacher-oriented. Reading materials were taught word by word and sentence by sentence. They were analysed in detail for the understanding of their grammar. Students were required to recite relevant grammar rules and remember word meanings from dictionaries without any context. There was little or no oral practice. The only way for the students to gain speaking competence was to recite the texts they had been taught and retell what they had recited (Hu and Gao, 1995). There was no 'appropriateness' in their language applications (Shen, 2000). When they were left in a communicative situation, they would grope for words and expressions and put them together without giving any consideration to their appropriate context. As a result, they lacked 'appropriate' English linguistic schemata and English cultural schemata. Their native linguistic schemata and native cultural schemata were always in a dominant position. Therefore, instead of using appropriate English they tended to use Chinese English - Chenglish (Cheng et al, 1988, Shen, 2000). The Grammar-translation method has been the dominant ELT method in China for many years. Its traces can still be widely found today in teaching that is largely grammar-based (Hu, 1990, Shen, 2000).

The mainstream pedagogical methodology in the West during the period between World War I and World War II was the Audio-lingual method, which was founded on the basis of structural linguistics and behavioural science (Kramsch, 2001). It made full use of recording facilities provided by modern technology. This method was language structure centred. Listening and speaking preceded reading and writing. Dialogues and sentence patterns were designed in terms of stimulus-response-reinforcement-repetition. Students formed their linguistic habits by means of continuous exercises (Zhang, 1983).

The main tasks of this method are to conduct teaching activities centering on sentence patterns. Students are drilled through imitation, practice and repetition. Language teaching is undertaken in the target language and in a set context.

Such methods are beneficial to students in terms of competence of aural comprehension and mastery of good pronunciation and intonation. They avoid the complicated grammatical analysis and abstract inference of the translation method (Hu, 1990). But the linguistic schemata they have acquired through repetitious 'pattern drills' are too 'stereotyped' and 'isolated' from authentic, cultural contexts. Students need further practice before they can put into use the skills they have acquired (Hu, 1990).

In the seventies, a new pedagogical approach appeared in England. Wilkins proposed the notion of linguistic functions, which paved the way for Communicative Language Teaching (1979). He argued that the aim of language teaching was to teach learners to exploit their grammatical (and lexical) knowledge in creative acts of communication. Later, more theories on the communicative approach were put forward. They were based on the functional grammar of Halliday (1973), the social linguistic theories of Gumperz and Hymes (1964), Hymes (1971) and the philosophical linguistic theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1967, 1969).

Featured as being student-oriented, the teaching process is a communicative process. What is being taught in class is not just knowledge itself but the means to obtain this knowledge. It focuses on the language competence of the students. Students learn to use English and use English to learn (Li, 1984). Class activities are based on authentic and practical tasks to enable students to use the language they are learning in appropriate contexts. Students taught in these kinds of environment tend to be less rigid in their ways of thinking and behaving. They are more easily motivated to participate in class activities. They tend to find their own ways of solving their problems in language learning. When they use the knowledge they have learned, they can form the relevant schemata (Cazden et al, 1972, Xiao, 1987). As Kramsch summarizes,

Communicative approaches to language teaching, whether they be of the functional-notional type of the seventies or of the proficiency orientation of the eighties, expose learners as much as possible to spoken or written texts that have not been fabricated for pedagogical purposes. It is hoped that, by making communication more authentic, learners will be able to better *understand* the speaking customs and ways of life of the target country, and thus behave more appropriately in native-speaker environments (1993,p185).

She also claims that

The success of communicative approaches to language teaching has been accounted for by their functional usefulness and universal characteristics, but their real potential may lie in their ability to engage the learner in the dialectic of meaning production. There will always be a struggle between the teacher whose charge it is to make the students understand and eventually adopt foreign verbal behaviours and mindsets, and the learners who will continue to use transmitted knowledge for their own relevance. This struggle is the educational process *per se* (Kramsch, 1993,p239).

Due to the ten-year disaster, the Great Cultural Revolution; the introduction of western methodologies was delayed in China. When the communicative approach began to be popular in Britain in the seventies, Chinese scholars were trying to adopt their 'new and contemporary' method – the audio-lingual method - from the west.

One of the most representative textbooks compiled by Chinese linguists for the audio-lingual approach was Professor Hu Wenzhong's (Hu et al, 1983) *College English*, a series of textbooks meant for University English majors. Despite their disadvantages, these books led the way in promoting the importance of the four skills in EFL teaching in China. They are still used in some of the universities in China.

The Communicative Approach was introduced into China during the late seventies and early eighties. Sponsored by the British Council and headed by Professor Li Xiaojun, a group of Chinese and English scholars experimented with this approach in the former Guangzhou Foreign Languages Institute. Their experiment covered the whole teaching process, ranging from curriculum, textbooks, teaching method and testing. As a result, they published a series of textbooks named *Communicative English for Chinese Learners* (abbreviated as CECL) (Li, 1986) with Professor Li as chief editor. This was the first series of textbooks based on the theories of the communicative approach in China. Both the textual layout and material selection broke the established format of traditional methods (Xiao, 1987, Chen, 1987).

The compilation of the textbooks was an attempt to adapt the communicative approach in ELT to the Chinese context. It aimed to help the students acquire not just knowledge of the form but to develop communicative competence. Each thematic unit was concerned with one aspect of social activity. The whole set of course books covered many areas, such as the British way of life, their social etiquette, their different ways of communication, business etc. They were popular because they represented a new stage in ELT in China, bringing new ideas. However, there was also resistance from some as it was thought that the new textbooks and methodology required much cultural background knowledge and new ways of teaching and learning, which were

deemed to be too demanding for Chinese teachers and Chinese students. Most of them had been too confined by their traditional learning schemata to adapt to these changes. They had been kept away from the outside world for such a long time that it was difficult for teachers and learners to accept such an overwhelming amount of new cultural knowledge from contexts very different from theirs. Some teachers understandably deviated from the tenets of the communicative approach. In summary, the applications of the Communicative Approach were inconsistent and teachers tended to resume their traditional ideas of teaching (Yu, 1988).

Like the CECL group, many Chinese academic staff in this field have been making great efforts to update their teaching methodologies and textbooks. They try to adopt western approaches from native speaker contexts and/or or adapt them to suit the English teaching situation in China.

Li Guanyi, a professor of English from Shanghai University of Foreign Language Studies, tried to compromise by integrating western styles with traditional styles in her English textbooks called 'A New English Course', which are divided into five levels (1A, 1B, 2, 3, 4) ranging from the post-elementary to the post-intermediate level. Each level consists of a student book, a workbook, a teacher's book and cassette tapes. Compared to the earlier books, Li's books are more appropriately adapted to Chinese learners' schematic ways of learning. Her recommended ways of reading provide a gentle transition from the traditional one so that Chinese learners find them acceptable. She provides an overall consideration and estimation of the situation of ELT in China to make her textbooks well targeted. She combines some traditional ELT viewpoints with current views on ELT methodology by keeping what has been useful and effective in the former and adopting those principles in the latter that are practicable and applicable to the Chinese situation. She calls for student-oriented class activities with the teacher's role as that of a facilitator to foster both their linguistic and communicative competence (Li, 1986).

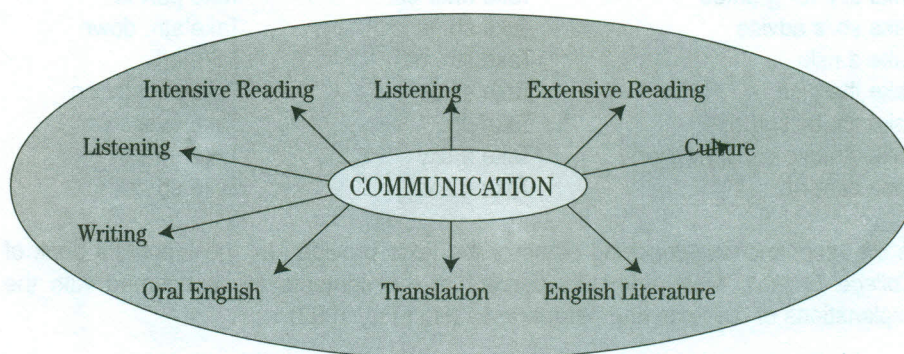
The textbooks are meant to make use of the strong points of each of the most influential ELT principles, which have been combined and integrated for such a purpose. Their limitation is that the language levels of the texts are almost the same throughout each of the books. The sequence and grading of the text material is however not well staged to meet the requirement of fostering the students' linguistic competence step by step.

2. National curriculum for the English majors in China

The national curriculum for the English majors has been revised from one based on the Translation Approach and the Audiolingual Approach to that of the Communicative Approach. Since the five-skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating)

communicative approach has been greatly recommended as a new comprehensive method, all the courses designed for English learners are now based on them. Teaching of the English majors in China is, in a broad sense, communication-oriented. Great attention has been paid to teaching how to exchange information and convey messages. Less attention has been paid to teaching how to decode and interpret messages appropriately and effectively by broadening students' social and cultural worldviews and arousing their awareness of language representationality. Students know a lot about stereotyped lexical items such as proverbs, idiomatic expressions or even word formations. They know the rules of English grammar but they know little about English culture. The teaching approach is mainly rule-based with great emphasis on the prescriptive linguistic rules and referential meanings of the words and with ignorance of processes of thinking and representational meanings of the words (McRae, 2000). This is the reason why their cognitive processes come to a halt when they are confronted with terms of alien cultural allusions. Most of their English culture books do not deal with these 'cultural' values. They deal only with general background and sociological or historical facts.

The course arrangement for English teaching in China reflects a particular conceptual framework for educating students. In planning the courses, they start with a central point in their mind and then radiate to the other related aspects. Having communication as their main aim, the courses are designed to achieve this objective as shown in the following diagram.



It is important for students to master communicative skills. But the risk of too much emphasis on these will create an 'egocentric' application. Students educated through such a syllabus tend to be more responsive to fixed expressions and conceptions. They get more used to Standard English. They are not very adaptable to the new and unusual ways of expression in English, because they have not been furnished with this kind of knowledge or given much practice in its interpretation.

As usual, most of the courses are language-based. Yet the main focus of each course is always on the language points. The teachers place more emphasis on idiomatic usage and grammatical points than on cultural factors. In their intensive reading class, for instance, they provide students with details of usage of words, exercises in paraphrasing the texts and grammatical practice. For instance in Text 1 of College English Book 3, they list the usage of the word 'take' in the following way

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) use or borrow without permission.
<i>Someone has taken my umbrella.</i> | 3) get, have; eat or drink:
<i>Please take a rest.
Take your medicine after supper.</i> |
| 2) carry something to a place;
go somewhere with sb.
to show him the way:
<i>Will you take the bag upstairs?
He took his kids to the Zoo.
She took the new teacher around the school.</i> | 4) need, require:
<i>It took me three hours to finish the story.
These things take time.</i> |

Take sth. for granted
Take sb.'s advice
Take a risk
Take the hint
Take sb. by surprise
Take sth into consideration
Take care of

Take after sb.
Take sb. in
Take sth. off
Take sides
Take up
Take a city
Take it easy

Take part in
Take sth. down
Take off
Take sb./sth. on
Take over
Take up
Take sb. in

In the recommended teaching plans of the texts provided by the teacher's book of *College English*, more than fifty percent of the contents are concerned with the explanations of the texts and paraphrases (Hu et al, 1992).

Teachers seldom offer students enough relevant information about their target culture, because they themselves do not have much experience with English culture, as most of them have not been abroad. Besides, there are few books available with such information for them to read. This confines their abilities as well as the students' abilities. It keeps most of them from developing the necessary cultural schemata. The lack of enough reference material is among one of the causes for such problems.

Apart from this, Chinese students also receive little input with regard to the language-based teaching approaches proposed by Carter and McRae (McRae and Boardman, 1984, Carter and Long, 1987a). The acquisition of thinking skills is often ignored in English teaching processes. Lack of knowledge and understanding about the pragmatics of English discourses also results in Chinese ways of using reading schemata when they are confronted with English texts.

3. Comparison of textual structures

As previously analysed, textbooks play a dominant role in ELT. They provide a basis for the application of relevant pedagogical approaches. Since the curriculum and modules for English teaching in China are different from the Western world, it is difficult to find textbooks for similar pedagogical purposes. In different cultures, the purpose or objective of textbook writing is closely linked to the distinctive features present in them. For instance, in Chinese textbooks, the objective is purely text-based or product-based while English textbooks are noted for their process-based approaches. A study of the organisation of English textbooks can also reflect how students are educated. The following is a display of the textual organisation of a textbook by British textbook compilers (Carter and Long 1987a) and a textbook by Chinese textbook writers (Hu et al, 1983).

THE WEB OF WORDS (Carter & Long, 1987a)	COLLEGE ENGLISH (Hu et al, 1983)
Introduction for the student	Pattern Drills
Orientation	Drill A
Scenario I	Drill B
Exploitation	Drill C
	Drill D
Scenario II	Drill E
Scenario III	TEXT A
Scenario IV	Words and Expressions...
	Notes
Summary of the Unit	Oral and written work
	Phonetics
	Grammar
	Exercises
*(Its different text has different strategies and exercises,)	Text B
	Notes

Even though the books are designed for different modules, the comparison of the designs of the texts as single units and the methodologies they require for teaching reveal different pedagogical ideologies. It is evident that Carter and Long's book covers more areas than Hu et al's book. It helps learners of English to understand and appreciate English literary texts, by using a wide variety of learning techniques and exercises throughout the book, which indicate different stages and levels. Its language teaching purpose is to enable learners to appreciate the style and techniques of the writing, though there are no explicit clues to this. It provides learners with strategies 'to use response to language as a basis for reading and appreciating authentic literary sources.' (Carter and Long 1987a: 1)

Hu et al's (1983) book focuses more attention on prescriptive language rule teaching. It is mainly used in China for intensive reading. It aims to familiarize students with linguistic points. Every lesson begins with pattern drills, which still carry vestiges of the Audiolingual Method. These pattern drills are aligned with grammar study. They are independent parts allocated according to the requirement of each stage of grammar learning, which has little relevance to the text. The text material chosen for each lesson is primarily concerned with the vocabulary and grammar acquisition of the students. The exercises are either vocabulary or grammar oriented. Most of the questions are low order questions in relation to the content of the texts. Very few high order questions are provided, which require students' own interpretations of the texts, their own responses and world experiences (Carter and Long, 1991). Its additional text is prepared to make up the leftover time assigned for each lesson. However, the book does not introduce different learning techniques. A similar kind of formula makes up a framework of the whole book and every lesson follows the same kind of formula. A teacher usually starts a lesson with pattern drills and then asks some students in turn to repeat each pattern by mechanical substitution. For instance,

--Is it all right if I turn on the radio?

--Go ahead. (Yes, fine.)

I use your bike for half an hour

I give your book back at the end of the week

We practise our singing during the break

I write the dictation on a sheet of paper

We come and visit you over the weekend

I take more credit courses than I need to

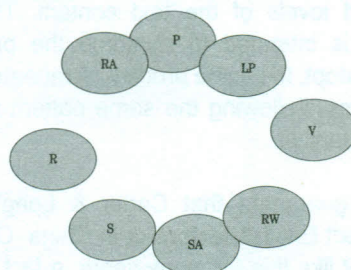
One of the students in a pair is required to replace the italicised part of the question with the given substitutes. Another student has to repeat the same answer again and again. Their attention is mainly given to the linguistic content of the utterances with the result that both of them say what they are expected to say and hear what they are expected to hear. They may however, comprehend nothing. The only difference they

can make is to take different turns as a pseudo addresser or a pseudo addressee. After the pattern drills, the teacher explains every new word and expression listed in the textbook. He/she makes sure that the students know every single item in the text before he/she paraphrases each sentence. Meanwhile the teacher asks the class to answer the relevant questions about the content of the text or its language points. Unfortunately, the students fail to acquire their proper reading schemata, owing to overprotection by their teacher, who removes from the text whatever he/she thinks is beyond the students. As a result, they lack any stimulus to engage with new ideas for the development of reading schemata. The oral work practice for the text usually results in students' monotonous answers because they can get their answers just by mechanical repetition. There are no such class activities as role-plays. All the exercises in each lesson consist of grammar, vocabulary and translation. The whole class is teacher-oriented. Teachers dominate the class. Students are often in a passive position. They tend to be like 'containers' to be filled by teachers.

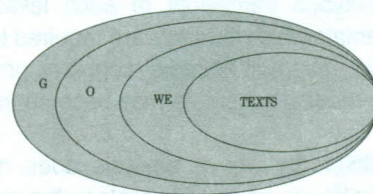
These distinctive features can be illustrated as below.

LP---Language patterns	RA---Reading aloud	SA---Stylistic analysis
P--- Prediction	RW---Rewriting	V---Vocabulary
R---Ranking	S---Scenario	G--- Grammar
O---Oral and written work		WE---Words and expressions

CARTER & LONG'S



HU ET AL'S



With the texts as a source of information, Carter & Long's book expands a learner's way of thinking. The techniques and training are closely related and self-contained. Learners can use either a single technique or a combination of techniques to understand and appreciate the texts. Every technique is covered in each lesson and helps students form their relevant schema. By the end of the book/course, the students will have acquired substantial reading schemata, which are ready to be activated for decoding English discourses. They offer many choices of reading schemata for students' selection. Students can form and utilize all their schematised

techniques in their learning process. Take Unit 2 for instance. The students are required to listen and read the poem *Meeting at Night* by Robert Browning. Then they are asked to produce a short 'telefilm' to accompany the poem. The reading task is assigned to activate their prior knowledge. 'The learners are required to put themselves in the position of director or producer of a film or videotape. They must make all the decisions. ... It is creative, requiring visualisation, and can only be done, of course, with close examination of the text itself. The learner must examine the text for clues' (Carter and Long, 1987b: 15). They cannot get their answers simply by repeating the original sentences in the text. They have to digest them first, refer back to their existing knowledge and form their own ideas. Then they can put forward their ideas in their group work. They are involved with text exploration and interpretation. They draw evidence from the language material to support their own points of view and judgements. They work towards forming their independent reading schemata. The whole process is learner-oriented. The discussion makes comprehension of the poem easier for the students and consequently they become more and more confident in coping with poetry reading. Their reading schemata will be enriched along with different class activities.

Hu et al's (1983) work lacks this kind of diversity. Its limited technique is repetitive and overlapping. The reading schemata which students have formed as a result of attending this course are not as diversified as those of Carter & Long's (1987a). Students have fewer choices for their activation of proper schemata for reading. Their competence in reading is thus confined. The obvious difference Hu et al (1983) make for each lesson is the gradually graded levels of the text content. Though the stereotyped framework of each lesson is intended to reinforce the propounded schemata which students are required to adopt, the same procedure repeated in every lesson may dull learners' cognitive process. Following the same pattern every day, their reading schemata may become mechanical.

However the above analysis does not guarantee that Carter & Long's (1987a) textbook can be used to replace the present English textbooks in China. One reason is that Chinese students have been taught like this for many years, a fact which has formed and stereotyped their ways of learning and reading schemata. They are more ready to accept Hu et al's (1983) approach. Another reason is that Carter & Long's (1987a) book is not compiled for such a module. It is meant for European students. It does not meet some of the requirements set out by the Chinese curriculum. Hu et al's (1983) is more teacher-centred and more in keeping with cultural expectations concerning the role of the teacher.

Of course the objectives of these two textbooks are quite different. Hu et al's (1983) book is compiled as a main language course to enable the Chinese students to pass the Tests for English Majors (TEM4 and TEM8), the national English examinations for

English majors, and meet the basic requirement of their English language learning. Carter & Long's (1987a) book is designed as a complementary book to English language study. There is no such module suitable for application of their textbook in China. So the problem of the textbooks in China is not an individual problem. It is an issue related to its whole ELT system as well as to the broader educational system.

4. The urgent need for language-based approaches to be applied critically in China

To improve the ELT situation in universities in China, an appropriate approach would be to use critically the language-based approaches represented by Carter, McRae, Long, Collie, Slater and Simpson, who lay emphasis on the four dimensions of these approaches as being language-based, student-centred, activity-based and process-oriented. These approaches help students develop linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, cognitive and affective capacity and metaphor awareness. They consider literary texts in terms of linguistic devices, enabling students to form their necessary schemata which are crucial for interpretations of a text (Carter and Long, 1987a) (Collie and Slater, 1987) (Carter and Long, 1991) (Pope, 1995) (Carter and McRae, 1996) (Simpson, 1997).

With the four dimensions, the approaches will be able to get the Chinese teachers off their platform and work through the text with their students' involvement and participation, which will enhance the students' creativity in their engagement with the text (Carter and Long, 1991). The approaches put more responsibility for interpretation on the students (Carter, 1996) and they emphasize the process of learning rather than that of teaching (Long, 1986).

The main way in which the approaches are in line with Chinese teachers' expectation of teaching is that teachers need to be active in designing the class activities and encourage their students' interests in the texts and stimulate their schemata to communicate with the text. The three ways of communication (between students and the text, the teacher and the text and the students and the teacher) will broaden students' views and perspectives to scrutinize the text and enrich their reading schemata. It is not difficult for Chinese teachers to adapt to these methodologies so long as they can still sense their role as a facilitator in the classroom (Duff and Maley, 1990).

Another aspect that is suitable for critical adaptation by Chinese teachers is that the teaching targets of these approaches are more focused and are not so diversified as the communicative approach. The things that may challenge Chinese teachers are the techniques and procedures employed in these approaches, such as prediction exercises, cloze exercises, summary writing, ranking tasks, active comprehension

techniques, scenario acting etc. (Carter, 1996), which have to be adapted accordingly to suit their needs. Without providing them with schematic knowledge by means of these approaches, it is nearly impossible to expect Chinese EFL learners to read and interpret texts by utilizing varied schemata as the English students do, for they cannot access them and are not at all familiar with them.

5. Limitations to the application of language-based approaches in ELT in China and some critical suggestions

Though it has been emphasized that language-based approaches can lead Chinese students to a certain level of language and culture awareness, the utilization of the approaches themselves might have some limitations in relation to teaching schemata of Chinese teachers and learning schemata of Chinese students, their culture and their educational system. To avoid such problems that might be caused by these limitations, some lessons can be drawn from the practices of communicative approaches led by Professor Li Xiaojun and her CECL group, who imported the approach into China without much consideration for the schemata of English teaching in China. What resulted was improper utilization of and digression from the imported communicative approach by Chinese teachers. This indicates that language-based approaches cannot be taken lock, stock and barrel and dumped onto Chinese teachers and students. As Pennycook (1998) maintains, colonizing exportation of approaches will not be accepted and integrated into ELT in China.

In introducing language-based approaches into China, first of all, the dominant attitudes of Chinese teachers have to be considered. Since the unavailability of relevant reference materials may be an obstacle to experimentation, the class activities teachers create may tend to be grammar-oriented. To solve this practical problem and to achieve the goals of language-based approaches, textbooks on language-based approaches must be accompanied by relevant reference materials for easy access by Chinese teachers.

On the other hand, some Chinese students, as aforementioned, have been socialised by their dominant approaches in education to be passive receivers of knowledge. They are more ready to accept their teachers' explications than attempt to engage personally with the reading materials. They pay more attention to the teacher's face value and consider it rude to interrupt their teacher to pose a question. Even if their teachers provide them with opportunities for questions, they will consider their questions carefully before posing them (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998). It is considered a waste of the other's time, if a posed question is regarded as inappropriate. Thus, those who ask questions take the risk of being laughed at. Since none of them want to become the laughing stock in class, they tend to be cautious and may find learner-oriented class activities too risky and face threatening.

Another problem which is likely to cause difficulties to the application of language-based approaches in China is the large size of classes, each on average consisting of more than thirty students for classes of English majors or more than sixty for non-English major classes. This large class size demands excessive effort from teachers in terms of class control and students' participation in class activities.

Finally, the most serious problem that the application of the language-based approach will face is caused by the examination systems for English in China, which is rather product-based and requires students' knowledge by rote rather than by creative skills. As a result, teachers have to help students come to grips with traditional testing techniques to be in line with their existent testing systems. Their compelled constant retrogressions to the traditional ways from their normal application orbits of language-based approaches might dishearten both their students and themselves and shake their confidence in these new approaches.

However the presence of all these impediments does not mean it is impossible to develop language-based approaches. It means that language-based approaches have to be adapted critically to suit the situation in China. In return, their introduction and application must and will bring about some changes to the present ELT situation in China, which has to adapt and make the necessary changes to enjoy the benefits of language-based approaches.

As far as the adaptation of language-based approaches for ELT in China is concerned, the researcher has some interesting ideas about learner-centered class activities proposed in these approaches, based on his experiments in university teaching and his reviews on cultures of ELT in China.

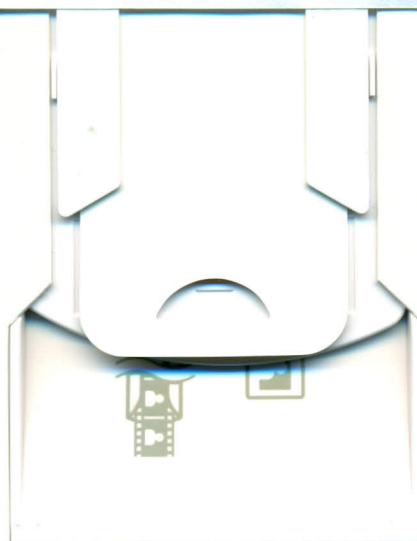
For activities in relation to group work or pair work, to avoid a 'turmoil' or an uncontrollable situation in classrooms for teachers, a large class has to be divided into smaller groups, in which group leaders have to be chosen or appointed. These group leaders are responsible for hosting their discussions, transmitting the gist of the activities and finally nominating representatives or 'spokesmen' to speak in front of the whole class on behalf of their group. Different opinions from different groups have to be compared in the end by the teacher, who has to make 'authoritative' comments on these different opinions. Otherwise students might lose their interest or not take their group discussions seriously. Such arrangements will enable teachers to manage their large classes and ensure that their anticipated class activities will be under their 'invisible' control. Competitiveness will motivate the students to be more actively involved to enhance the reputation of their respective groups, the pursuit of which is in accordance with their culture of collectivism (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998, Gudykunst, 1998). Besides, it can help prevent students losing face in class, for they do not have to speak on their own behalf. As far as teachers are concerned, such an arrangement is more suited to their reasonable time allotments with so many students' participation.

Another alternative and more convenient way for Chinese teachers to cope with such a large class can be undertaken by means of computerized language lab equipment. Teachers can divide their students into different groups and change their group members, if needed, via the group programmes of the computerized system. They can audit, monitor or participate in students' group discussions in turn without interruptions caused by their physical appearance. They can also operate the console (the main computer for the teachers) to have group discussions recorded on students' individual tapes for their home revision. Or they can record some of the students' speeches on their own tape for demonstration to the whole class. This scheme is also very rewarding to those students who are too shy or not confident enough to speak in front of others. It also facilitates teachers in the organization of their class activities. In a sense, it can help to solve the large class size problem.

In undertaking teaching procedures proposed by language-based approaches, what is required from students may not have to be done by students on their own. For such activities as scenario writing or creative writing, which the students are not familiar with, it is better for teachers to provide Chinese students with the necessary genres or procedures for such kinds of writing. For instance, in scenario writing, students have to know the usual formula of a scenario, because they have not been exposed to such a genre and have difficulty getting access to the related material. If a computerized language lab is used, a teacher can provide the framework of a scenario by writing a file into the computer as a model to get the students involved in the activities. Different versions of scenario from the students can finally be displayed, compared and commented on the screen.

In carrying out the gist of these approaches, teachers have to introduce these approaches step by step with full consideration for the background of the students, because most of the university students have never before in their education experienced such approaches. Students are not as independent in their learning processes as students in Britain, who have been trained to do various projects on their own from very early on. With an increasing percentage of new methodologies in their teaching processes, Chinese teachers will enable their students to accept them gradually and benefit from them. It would be better and more efficient if this transformation period could take place in their early stages of education.

Last but not least is the fundamental change that language-based approaches will have on testing and assessment. This has serious implications for the traditional ways of assessing students in China. Indeed, this represents a big issue to be further investigated and explored.



6. Conclusion

What should Chinese ELT teachers do to improve their present situation? Should they get rid of their traditional pedagogical approaches and adopt wholesale the approaches from native speaker contexts? The view and analysis above indicates that it may be wise to continue using the best features of the traditional approach and combine them with innovations from native speaker contexts. I recommend therefore the critical mediation and adaptation of language-based approaches to the varying sociocultural and educational contexts of ELT in different parts of the world including China.

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